

Georgia Department Of Human Resources

Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program (WIC)

What is WIC?

The Women, Infants and Children program is a special nutrition program for low-income pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women and children up to the age of 5. WIC is a national program established in 1972 to improve the health and nutritional status of low-income families by providing special supplemental foods during critical periods of growth and development. WIC works with other health care services. The program provides nutrition education, nutritious foods, breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals to other health services. The Georgia WIC program is 100 percent federally funded and serves families with incomes up to 185 percent of the federal poverty level.

Participants who are eligible receive vouchers to redeem at approved grocery stores and pharmacies for special foods rich in protein, iron, calcium, and vitamins A and C. These include eggs, cheese, milk, cereal, fruit juices, dried peas and beans, peanut butter, and infant formula. Women breastfeeding their babies receive carrots and tuna.

WIC encourages breastfeeding because breast milk is best to give babies a healthy start. WIC gives pregnant women education and support to help them make the best choice for feeding their babies, and provides ongoing support and information to mothers who want to breastfeed.

WIC in Georgia

- Georgia's WIC program is the seventh largest in the nation and second largest in the southeast.
- Georgia WIC will spend \$150 million in federal funds during federal fiscal year 2003 (October 2002–September 2003). An additional \$55 million in infant formula rebates is anticipated.
- WIC reaches approximately 75 percent of those women and children estimated to be eligible in Georgia.
- The Georgia WIC program served an average of 237,000 women, infants and children per month during federal fiscal year 2002.
- Infant formula rebates saved Georgia \$55 million last year. This allowed the program to serve thousands of additional clients.
- WIC brought about \$195 million into the Georgia economy last year.
- The average WIC benefit is about \$53 worth of food vouchers per month.

Why is WIC important?

Georgia has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the nation. Good nutrition and regular prenatal care during pregnancy, and good nutrition and preventive health care for infants are key to preventing babies from dying or becoming disabled.

- Low-income families in Georgia who receive WIC, Medicaid, immunizations and medical checkups have a significantly lower infant mortality rate than do other low-

income families in the state. Women participating in WIC are more likely to get prenatal care early in their pregnancy and to seek preventive care, such as health checks and immunizations, for their children.

- Every dollar spent on WIC saves up to \$3 in health care costs, according to a national study.

Who gets WIC?

WIC is available to women who are pregnant or breastfeeding or have given birth within the past two months, and children up to their 5th birthday. To be eligible for WIC, they must meet the following requirements:

- Be a resident of Georgia or a migrant farm worker currently living in Georgia.
- Be at nutritional risk. The nutritional risk must be determined and documented by a nutritionist or other health professional. Examples of nutrition-related medical conditions are: anemia, low birth weight, abnormal weight gain during pregnancy, a history of high-risk pregnancies, or inadequate diet.
- Have a total family income of no more than 185 percent of the federal poverty level. A person receiving Medicaid, TANF, or food stamps automatically meets the income eligibility requirement.

Examples of eligible income

Family size	Yearly income
1	\$16,613
2	\$22,422
3	\$28,231
4	\$34,040

For each additional family member add \$5,809.

How to get WIC

- Applicants wishing to apply for WIC benefits should contact their county health departments. Residents of Fulton County may also apply at Grady Hospital and Southside Community Health Center.